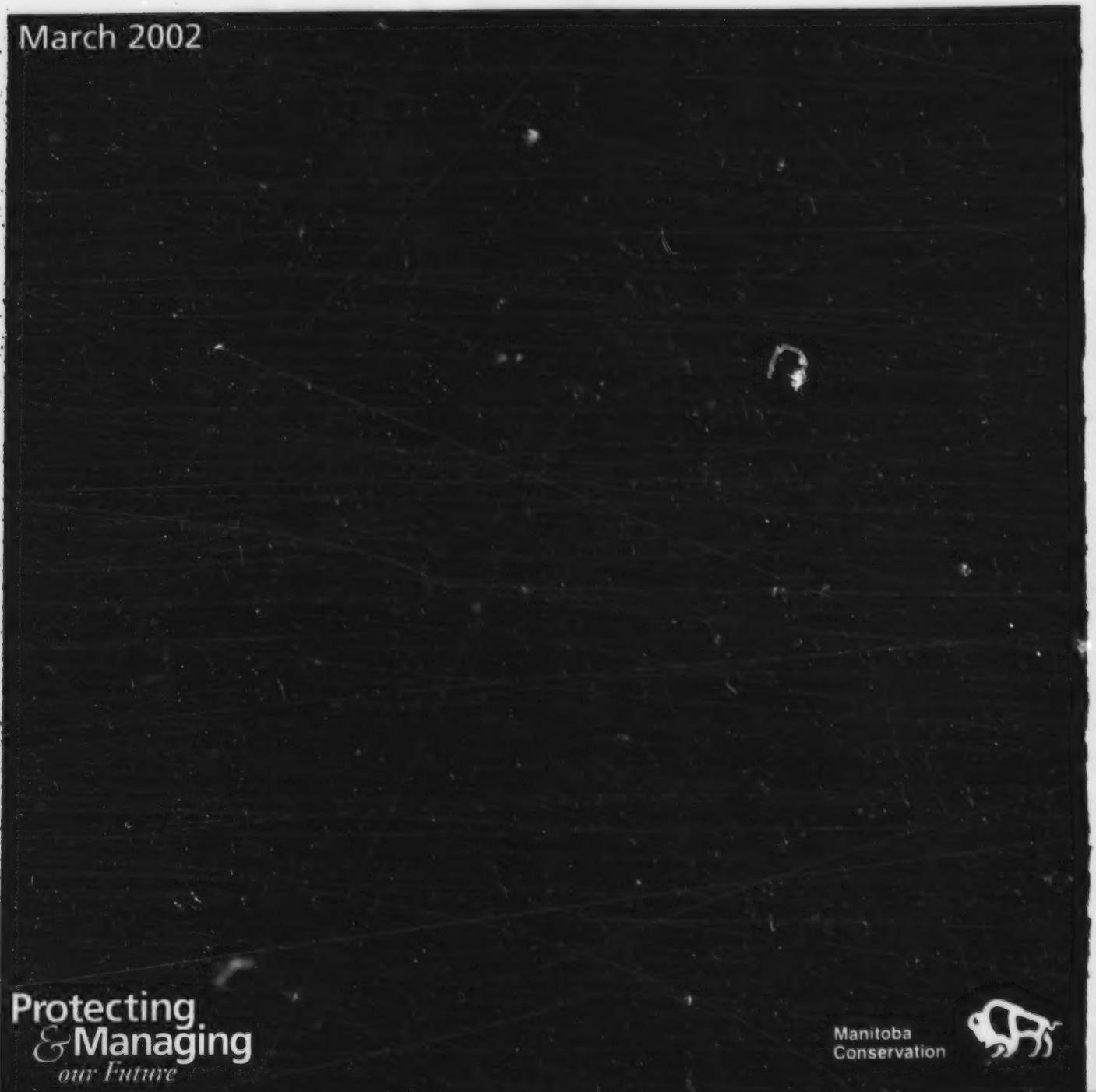
Next Steps

Priorities for Sustaining Manitoba's Forests

March 2002



Protecting & Managing *our Future*

Manitoba Conservation

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Priorities for Sustaining Manitoba's Forests 3

1. Increase scientific and traditional knowledge of Manitoba's forests 3
2. Enhance forest stewardship 5
3. Increase co-management, employment and economic development opportunities for Aboriginal communities 6
4. Promote a sustainable forest economy 6
5. Update and improve legislation and guidelines 8

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Introduction

Forests are critical to meeting environmental, cultural and social and economic needs in Manitoba.

Forests improve air quality, provide wildlife habitat, moderate temperatures and reduce soil and water erosion. The province's forests are home to many communities and represent a rich cultural heritage. Forestry related activities provide work for about 13,000 people across Manitoba and forests provide some of our best and most beautiful recreational opportunities.

While Manitoba is considered a prairie province, forests make up a significant portion of our land base including vast stretches of undeveloped boreal forest. Boreal forests are found in mid-to-northern areas of the province and are made up of softwoods such as spruce and pine, and hardwoods such as poplar and birch.

If we want Manitoba's forests to thrive in the future, we must work to achieve three primary goals:

- Protect forest ecosystems throughout the province
- Increase co-management, employment and economic development opportunities for Aboriginal communities
- Make Manitoba a leader in the promotion of a sustainable forest economy

The importance of achieving these goals has never been greater. The recent *Manitoba Climate Change Task Force* report makes the staggering statement that "the southern portion of the boreal forest is expected to decline and disappear, while the northern edge may not be able to extend into the existing tundra ecosystem due to the poor soils in this region." At the same time, the boreal forest offers a tremendous opportunity for carbon storage that enhances Canada's contribution to greenhouse gas reduction.

The *Climate Change Task Force* report goes on to state: "The key challenge for forest-dependent sectors and communities will be to develop creative and adaptive management strategies that enhance both the ecological resilience and the diversity of the economic benefits from Manitoba's forests." (p. 12 *Climate Change Task Force*, September, 2001).

The future of Manitoba's forests is of particular importance to the many Aboriginal and northern communities located in some of our most forested regions. What happens to the boreal forest has a significant impact on the future of these communities. Local communities must therefore be key partners in developing strategies around the sustainable management of forests and the employment opportunities they provide.

Sustainable forest management has already begun through the application of provincial policy. Manitoba signed the Canada Forest Accord and is working to implement both the accord and the former Round Table document *Applying Manitoba's Forest Policies* through *Manitoba's Forest Plan... Towards Ecosystems Based Management.* The report is a framework for future directions in forest management and development in Manitoba to be consistent with economic, environmental and social objectives.

In addition, the province is developing protocol for co-management through the newly created Aboriginal Resource Council and the Aboriginal Relations Branch in Manitoba Conservation. New co-management agreements are underway and active recruitment in resource management is already taking place in the department through the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

Sustainable forest management is also being undertaken by Manitoba's forestry sector. Companies are working towards certification of their wood products based on sustainable resource management. In addition, some companies are partnering in efforts to update scientific forest inventory data and create protected areas. Further, there are companies pursuing increased employment and co-management opportunities with Aboriginal communities. All of these efforts are strongly supported by the provincial government.

While these positive actions should be duly recognized, they are not uniform across the province. We must continue to work together to achieve the goals of maintaining the sustainability of our forest ecosystem, being leaders in a sustainable forest based economy and increasing partnership and employment opportunities for Aboriginal communities.

In order to meet these goals, the following strategy outlines five priorities for sustaining Manitoba's forests:

1. **Increase scientific and traditional knowledge of Manitoba's forests**
2. **Enhance forest stewardship**
3. **Increase co-management, employment and economic development opportunities for Aboriginal communities**
4. **Promote a sustainable forest economy**
5. **Update and improve legislation and guidelines**

The Manitoba government will work with forestry companies, contractors, quota holders, Aboriginal organizations, First Nations and other governments to address these priorities. Priorities should be met in an open and transparent way to allow meaningful input from the public. This approach is consistent with the *Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation* (COSDI) recommendations, that were adopted by the government in 2000, to review and implement sustainable development strategies.

Next Steps: Priorities for Sustaining Manitoba's Forests

Priorities for Sustaining

Manitoba's Forests

1. Increase Scientific and Traditional Knowledge of Manitoba's Forests

To better understand Manitoba's forests, particularly for the purposes of carbon credits, ecosystem management, protected areas and sustainable economic development, we need to have more up-to-date scientific data.

- Manitoba's **forest inventory process** has not been updated for close to 30 years. As a first step the Manitoba government and LP Canada have partnered to update the inventory in the Mountain Forest Section, each committing over one million dollars to the effort. The government has also updated the inventory in the Tembec Forest Management Licence Area. Unlike the "counting trees" approach of the past, forest inventory now includes assessment of wetlands, critical wildlife habitat, sensitive water bodies and non-productive forestlands. The new inventory process will be a tool for maintaining biological diversity and ecological functions.

  Completing a forest inventory for all of Manitoba is an enormous task, and one that benefits everyone. All partners, including governments, industry, research agencies and local communities must work together on this very important initiative.

- **A science-based approach** has been supported by the Manitoba government along with industry and research partners through the establishment of the Centre for Forest Interdisciplinary Research (C-FIR) at the University of Winnipeg in 2000. The research centre will support key areas of sustainable forest management and related development. The Manitoba government has partnered with the Canada Foundation for Innovation, matching a $600,000 contribution to assist the development of C-FIR and the province is providing an additional $12,000 over a three year period to support research projects.

  In 2001, Manitoba Conservation joined Manitoba's forest industry and the Manitoba Model Forest to become a partner in the Sustainable Forest Management Network (SFMN), that levered $100,000 worth of research to Manitoba in this past year alone. The SFM Network develops strategies and tools to ensure that Canada's boreal forests are effectively managed, so biological diversity will be preserved and the resource base will be sustained for future generations.

- **Carbon storage** in Manitoba's forests, soils and wetlands offers a potential opportunity for

offsetting greenhouse gas emissions. An ecosystem, such as oceans, forests or soils removes and stores carbon from the air. Trees, for example, convert carbon dioxide from the air into plant sugars through the process of photosynthesis.

Carbon storage from Manitoba contributes to Canada's reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Manitoba Conservation is working with other provincial jurisdictions and the federal government to address the research, technology and infrastructure needs to determine a carbon inventory from Manitoba's forests and to develop a credible verification protocol.

- Manitoba Conservation has been a partner in the **Manitoba Model Forest** since its inception and continues to contribute either in-kind or financially to projects such as caribou research, natural disturbance research, assessments of genetic diversity in black spruce and spatial model development.
- **A traditional knowledge approach** should also be a part of evaluating the sustainability of our forest resources. Traditional knowledge tells us that activities related to one element of the environment can have a direct impact on another. Data collection should include knowledge gathered from local communities about the forests in their traditional territories.
- Many forest management issues faced by Manitoba are common to other parts of Canada. To address these challenges, Manitoba is a partner in the **Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM)**, a coalition of federal, provincial and territorial ministers. The CCFM is leading a variety of initiatives including a national monitoring program for sustainable forest management and development and maintenance of national forestry databases, and oversees the implementation of the National Forest Strategy.

Objectives to

Increase scientific and traditional knowledge of Manitoba's forests

That the province together with the forestry sector, Aboriginal communities and research agencies increase forest inventory activities, scientific data base and a traditional knowledge base for the purposes of:

- **Maintaining biological diversity and ecological functions**
- **Calculating carbon credits**
- **Providing the necessary information for decisions regarding forest allocations**
- **Providing the necessary information for decisions on the most economic and sustainable use of wood fibre**
- **Facilitating final designations for protected areas**
- **Assessing the potential for non-timber forest products and ecotourism**

That the province of Manitoba continue to be active participants in the initiatives led by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers with particular attention to implementing the National Forest Strategy and support the Criteria & Indicators and National Forest Inventory System initiatives.

That the province of Manitoba continue to actively pursue opportunities with the federal government to increase data specifically related to climate change impacts on the boreal forest in Manitoba.

2. Enhance Forest Stewardship

Forest Renewal

- **Forest renewal** treatments are essential in ensuring the replacement of trees taken from cutting areas. Forest renewal is conducted by Manitoba Conservation and the forest management license holders: Tembec, Tolko and LP Canada. One of the most common and successful treatments is tree planting.
- Manitoba Conservation is currently developing the Manitoba Silviculture Information System to track forest renewal treatments, harvesting activities, depletion and the achievement of provincial standards spatially through a Geographic Information System. This system will also help measure the potential for carbon credits.
- Considering the enormous value of forest renewal, Manitoba Conservation is updating the **Forest Renewal Charge** and will re-assess it every five years to ensure the province is accurately remunerated for the renewal of harvested sites. Manitoba's Forest Renewal Charge will be adjusted to reflect changes in costs.

Integrated Land Use Planning and Decision Making

- The COSDI report made recommendations on the implementation of the principles and guidelines of sustainable development in land use and environmental decision-making.

Upon taking office in 1999 the Manitoba government was faced with a proposal to expand forestry operations up the eastside of Lake Winnipeg – an area that contains one of the largest areas of continuous undeveloped boreal forest in North America.

Instead, recognizing the diversity of interests and needs of local communities in the area, the government announced the **East Side Lake Winnipeg Planning Initiative** to serve as a large area planning pilot project. When completed, the plan is intended to be a fully integrated land, environmental, social, cultural and economic planning system. This process involves the citizens of Manitoba and is intended to maintain ecosystem functions and the integrity of this unique area into the future. Aboriginal communities will play a critical role in this process.

Protected Areas

- The Protected Areas Initiative (PAI) began in 1990 with 354,000 hectares of protected land. To date, 5,365,000 hectares of land have now been set aside for protection representing approximately 8.3 per cent of Manitoba's land mass. The aim of this initiative is to protect representative samples of each of the province's terrestrial natural regions. The program is implemented in consultation with First Nations and industry sectors.

  Manitoba's designation for protection prohibits all resource extraction activity within the protected area, including forestry. The amount of land reserved for protected status varies among Forest Management Licence areas with greater participation by some licence holders. Further, the presence of undesignated areas of special interest (ASIs) creates uncertainty in long-term planning for government, industry, local communities and the program itself. Therefore, a concerted effort must be made to complete the network of protected areas.

Objectives to
Enhance the stewardship of Manitoba's Forests:

That Manitoba Conservation along with Forest Management Licence holders create the means to accurately track the success of forest renewal efforts.

That forest renewal charges reflect the actual costs of renewing harvested sites.

That the forestry sector actively participate in large area planning, where it is occurring, as a part of their overall long term planning exercises.

That the forestry sector actively participate in the Protected Areas program by moving quickly to identify areas of special interest that can be reserved for protected status and reserved areas that can be permanently protected.

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3. Increase Co-Management, Employment and Economic Development opportunities for Aboriginal Communities

Co-management of natural resources has become a successful approach to developing opportunities for Aboriginal communities and honouring treaty and Aboriginal rights. It is also specifically referenced in the Canada Forest Accord. Through the Manitoba government's co-management initiative, three resource co-management memoranda of understanding have been signed so far. These include three models (single band, multiple band, and province-wide) for the province to use in any future co-management agreements.

The Manitoba government has also set up an Aboriginal Relations Branch, an Aboriginal Resource Council to provide advice on co-management issues and an Aboriginal Employment Strategy to train and employ community members in resource management. Some companies within the forestry sector have been active in working together with local communities to develop employment and management partnerships.

Further opportunities exist through data collection, forest renewal, value added business development and the non-timber forest product industry. Working with communities includes shared land-use planning and the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge and cultural and social values. The timely resolution of land claims is also necessary to create a stable environment for forest management.

Objectives to
Increase co-management employment and economic devleopment opportunities for Aboriginal communities:

That Manitoba Conservation and forest management licence holders:

- **Increase access to forest resources for Aboriginal communities to pursue both traditional and economic development activities;**
- **Support Aboriginal employment and economic development in the forest sector and increase the capacity of Aboriginal communities, organizations and individuals to participate in and carry-out sustainable forest management;**

That the government of Manitoba support the newly created Aboriginal Resource Council in the development of a protocol for land and resource use planning as recommended by COSDI and use existing protocol guidelines in the COSDI report during and after the development of the protocol. These guidelines include meaningful consultation with Aboriginal peoples where resource use planning, significant resource allocation, development review processes and regulatory mechanisms are likely to affect Aboriginal treaty rights or interests.

4. Promote a Sustainable Forest Economy

Optimizing the economic contribution from Manitoba's forests

Manitoba's primary wood products industry is entering an era where increased innovation and investment will produce greater private and public use of wood resources and profitability. These positive results will be achieved in part by encouraging fuller use of available fibre resources. Optimal use of wood fibre helps to ensure the greatest value for the resource is realized while waste is minimized.

There are local examples of optimal use including a large particle board mill that uses scrap wood that would otherwise go to Winnipeg landfills. As well, another Manitoba company sells wood shavings for agricultural use, primarily as bedding for animals.

The province is actively developing an initiative to optimize fibre utilization within the province and support sustainable growth within the forest industry. In particular, the province is developing an initiative to optimize hardwood fibre utilization to support growth within this sector of the forest industry.

Sustainable use of the province's forest resources will be ensured through support of forest product certification and responsible public policy in environmental regulation, fees, investment procurement, forest practices, quota allocation and information management.

Non-Timber Forest Products

Across Canada there is increased interest in generating economic opportunities through the collection and processing of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Examples include products such as tree branches, bark, cones, mosses, berries, roots, flowers, mushrooms, grasses and syrups made from birch or Manitoba maple trees. NTFPs are also used in the development of nutraceutricals. This industry is also consistent with sustainability principles and traditional Aboriginal culture.

Recent commercial inquiries to Manitoba from as far as British Columbia and the western United States suggest this is a sector with expansion potential. Other provinces such as Saskatchewan and B.C. have expended considerable research into NTFPs policies and licensing.

In Manitoba, permits have been issued for the commercial harvest of fireweed, tree boughs, and birch syrup collection on Crown lands. It is anticipated that this industry will continue to grow and will provide future economic opportunities for the people of Manitoba. In particular this industry provides opportunities for Aboriginal communities as it is based on traditional knowledge and practices. The Manitoba government is supporting development of non-timber forest products at the Forest Diversification Centre at Keewatin Community College.

Ecotourism

Manitoba's forests contain thousands of lakes and some of Canada's most unique heritage and wilderness rivers. Our forests also contain a range of wildlife habitat including corridors for caribou and elk. With ecotourism growing in the US and Canada, the wildlife viewing and wilderness experience potential of our forests represents an untapped resource for Manitoba's tourism industry.

The Manitoba government is supporting ecotourism initiatives including community-based training through Keewatin Community College. The growth

Objectives to
Promote a Sustainable Forest Economy in Manitoba:

That the optimal economic contribution of our commercial timber resources be obtained by directing wood flow to its best and most productive use.

That the productive use of wood fibre should lead to job creation, income generation and skills training for local communities, capital expansion such as mill machinery and equipment, value added product development and technology transfer and that these be recognized by the forestry sector as the economic objectives of the province.

That ecotourism and the non-timber forest products industries continue to be promoted as community economic development tools.

That the provincial government support the certification of forests in Manitoba consistent with CCFM criteria and indicators and work with the forestry sector to increase awareness of certified wood products among consumers.

That the following initiatives be incorporated in the development of a comprehensive and sustainable approach to the economic development of Manitoba's primary wood products and non-timber forest products industries:

- **Manitoba's Forest Plan...Towards Ecosystems Based Management**
- **The Northern Development Strategy**
- **The Communities Economic Development Fund**
- **The Sustainable Development Act**
- **East Side Planning Committee**
- **energy Development Initiative**
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- **Northern Forest Diversification Centre**
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of ecotourism is an important community economic development initiative complementing the government's commitment to co management and the Protected Areas initiatives.

Supporting a Certified Wood Products Industry

Increasing scientific and traditional knowledge of our forests, enhancing forest stewardship, creating opportunities for co-management and creating sustainable economic use of our forest resources are objectives that are consistent with the goals of forest certification.

Certification is a market-based activity that provides consumers with an assurance that forest products they buy have originated from a sustainably managed forest audited by a third party. Different sets of standards are in place throughout the world, but most include criteria on the conservation of biological diversity, soil and water resources, the maintenance of forest ecosystem health and the maintenance of long-term socio-economic benefits to meet the needs of societies.

Certification in Canada's forests is on the rise and Manitoba, as a province, should support certification that is complimentary to CCFM criteria and indicators within our forestry sector. CCFM ministers across Canada along with the forestry sector have expressed their commitment to certification and recently, Manitoba Conservation along with the Manitoba Forestry Association and the Canadian Forest Service conducted a very successful seminar on forest certification in Manitoba. The success of certification, however, will depend on sustained commitment and on increased public awareness about the value of our forests.

5. Update and Improve Legislation and Guidelines

Current and New Guidelines

To sustain forests and the forest industry in Manitoba, regulations and guidelines must be followed and will continue to be enforced. The Forest Practices Initiative of Manitoba Conservation will provide consistent direction for all forestry activities across the province. Currently three draft documents prepared by the Forest Practices committee are undergoing departmental review.

Over the next three years, these and additional Forest Practices guidebooks will be developed. Documents underway include understory protection (trees not yet ready for harvest), pre-harvest survey requirements and forestry roads. These will be made available for public comment.

Updating Legislation

The province uses regulations and enforcement, as well as standards and guidelines, to ensure sound forest management. A new Manitoba Forest Act will be developed to be consistent with more recent policy and legislation. The new Forest Act will reflect public expectations for sustainable forest management, including participation and access to forests for Aboriginal communities.

Objectives to
Update an Improve Guidelines and Legislation Governing Sustainable Forest Practices in Manitoba:

That Manitoba Conservation continue to monitor guidelines and enforce regulations for all forestry operations in the province.

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